
Goodness of Fit

Research shows that goodness of fit between your child's temperament and your parenting style is important for healthy social and emotional development. Differences in child temperament require differences in parental handling to achieve a good fit. A good fit means parents match their demands or expectations with what their child is able to do, given the child's temperament, age and abilities. For example, we don't expect a baby to know what is safe, so we childproof our home. Similarly, we can't expect an active toddler to sit still for too long (until everyone finishes dinner), although we can expect him to come to the table for a short while. Creating a "good fit" means parents meet the needs of their child, while also meeting the needs of everyone else in the family (including the parents' own needs).



How can you create a good fit with your child?

Knowing your child's temperament is a good place to start. When you understand your child's temperament you can plan ahead to prevent problems - what we call being **proactive**. This means rather than just reacting to your child's behavior, you can plan where your child might have specific needs or difficulties and use parenting strategies that make it easier for your child to behave. For example, if your toddler adapts slowly to changes, you will likely have to introduce a new food a number of times before she is likely to try it. If your toddler is highly active, you will need to provide ways for him to release his energy, such as running in the park or climbing on the slide or jungle gym. Then you can stick firmly to limits of not climbing on the tables or countertops.